



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Planning Update

Summer 2001

This is the third in a series of newsletters updating you on the revision of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. This update describes where we are in the process, what happens next, and how you can help. The revised plan will provide overall direction for management of the Kodiak Refuge for the next 10-15 years.

Where We Are Now

We are in the process of revising management direction for Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Much has changed since the original direction was published in 1987. It is time to make sure that refuge management responds to today's needs. Because this is a revision—not a new plan—we are trying to focus on what needs fixing, rather than starting from scratch.

This may sound familiar. The last Kodiak Planning Update (January 2000) opened with these same words. It included a discussion of the significant planning issues and a set of preliminary alternatives addressing management options to resolve those issues. Public comment on these alternatives strongly suggested a need to re-evaluate where we were headed with refuge management and that we needed to do a better job of involving the public in our process. Not only did we need to do a better job of listening to the public, but the public needed to see our



Larry Aumiller/USFWS

planning process in action and understand some of the constraints under which we operate.

In the months following our last update, two significant actions occurred. First, we decided to re-evaluate the need for regulations implementing the Public Use Management Plan for the Refuge. Second, the State of Alaska completed a draft plan for the conservation and management of bears on the Kodiak Archipelago. We intend to integrate the recommendations from the State's plan into the revised comprehensive conservation plan.

In this update we again present for your review a set of preliminary alternatives for managing the Refuge over the next 10 to 15 years. These alternatives still focus primarily on management actions designed to address the significant planning issues identified during the scoping process.

How we developed the current alternatives was significantly different from the initial process. In the following discussions, we will explain this process, and some of the activities that influenced the process. We will also discuss refuge management activities that are common to all alternatives. This direction is not displayed in the preliminary alternatives table which focus on those actions which vary between the alternatives.

Kodiak Archipelago Bear Conservation and Management Plan

The population of bears on the Kodiak Archipelago is healthy and its habitat generally well protected. In response to growing public concern over development in and around bear habitat, an increasing demand for diverse recreational opportunities, and the need to minimize bear-human interactions, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game undertook a public planning process to develop a bear management plan for the archipelago. They began by interviewing local citizens in order to identify the stakeholders and better understand the relevant issues.

As the Fish and Wildlife Service shares management responsibility of the bears with ADF&G, and because the Refuge includes a large part of the archipelago, we pooled our resources with ADF&G to work with the public in developing their plan. An intergovernmental planning group, including ADF&G and FWS along with other federal, state, and local government agencies, was formed to select members of the public to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee which developed the draft bear management plan.

The brown bear management plan addresses human uses of the archipelago relating to bears, bear-human interactions, potential habitat degradation, the impact of private land ownership in bear habitat, and other bear management issues. The draft plan includes nearly 300 recommendations that address bear conservation and management as it relates to these areas. The recommendations reflect the public's desires and concerns for continued use of and coexistence with bears.

The Service agreed to integrate the bear management plan into the Kodiak Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan as part of the revision process. We are currently completing this task. A database is being developed that will track each individual recommendation to show how it is being addressed in the Refuge CCP. When completed, we will post this database on the Planning website at: <http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html>. Since the bear management plan is a draft, we expect some changes in the recommendations. These changes will be incorporated into the draft CCP before it is released for public review.

The draft plan has been distributed for public review and comment. Comments will be accepted until October 31, 2001. For additional information, or to request a copy of the plan, contact: Cindi Loker, Wildlife Planner; ADF&G, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Region II; 333 Raspberry Road; Anchorage, AK 99518-1599; 907/267 2130; cindi_loker@fishgame.state.ak.us. The draft plan is also available on the internet at: <http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/wildlife/geninfo/planning/kodiakbb.htm>.

Alternatives Formulation

During April/May 2001 the planning team for the Kodiak Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan revision held a series of team meetings which resulted in the development of a set of preliminary alternatives for management of the Refuge. The public was invited to participate in these meetings to allow for an exchange of information and ideas on refuge management between the planning team and refuge users. Open meetings also provided an opportunity for the public to see our planning process in action and to understand some of the constraints under which we operate.

The first meeting, held April 5th, focused on two areas. First, we reviewed laws, regulations, policies, and other management guidelines and direction that apply to the Refuge under any management plan. Second, we reviewed current refuge management direction, particularly as it relates to the significant planning issues: public access to and use of the Refuge; bear viewing on the Refuge; and special designations for areas of the Refuge (e.g. Wilderness, Wild & Scenic Rivers).

On April 24th, the meeting focused on special designations. We discussed how Wilderness designation of all or part of the Refuge would affect public access to and use of these lands; what it would mean to designate rivers as wild or scenic; and what a wild fish management zone is and how fisheries management would be affected by this designation. Where special designations could be applied on the Refuge, for use when developing management alternatives, were identified for

each designation. *Note: We have decided that genetic integrity of wild fish stocks on the Ayakulik, Sturgeon, and Karluk drainages will be addressed through specific management direction in the alternatives rather than with a special administrative designation.*

The Kodiak Archipelago Bear Conservation and Management Plan was the focus of the team meeting on May 17th. We discussed the State's draft recommendations and how to integrate them into the Refuge CCP. In addition, we reviewed activities associated with public access and public use of the Refuge, including bear viewing, protection of sensitive bear use areas, management of guided sport fishing and other commercial uses, regulation of unguided use, and management of the public use cabins. Again, the team identified management options to be used when developing potential alternatives for managing the Refuge.

At the last team meeting, held May 18th, our tasks were to review the building blocks developed at the previous meetings and develop a set of draft management alternatives for analysis in the draft environmental impact statement that will be prepared as part of the planning process. The current management alternative was identified and four preliminary management alternatives were developed. Management direction presented in the table of preliminary alternatives focused only on those issues where more than one possible option for resolving the issue is being considered. These preliminary alternatives are summarized in the accompanying table in this issue.

Management Policies and Guidelines Common to All Alternatives

Management of the National Wildlife Refuge System is based on the various laws governing the System and the regulations, policies, and other guidance, both national and regional, developed to implement these laws. Therefore, a great deal of the direction governing management of the Kodiak Refuge is established outside the planning process, and will not vary between the alternatives. This direction is occurring under current management and will continue under whichever alternative is adopted for implementation. For example, all operators providing commercial recreation activities on national wildlife refuges are required to obtain a special use permit. Where the number of special use permits is limited, such as for big game guiding on Alaska refuges, the process for awarding permits competitively is guided by specific regulations.

Also, much of the refuge's management direction from the current CCP is working fine and does not need to be changed. On-the-ground examples include continuation of fishery restoration actions such as fertilization of Karluk and Fraser lakes to restore zooplankton productivity and use of incubation facilities in the upper Thumb River to restore sockeye productivity. This management direction will be presented in the draft CCP but is not reflected in the table of preliminary alternatives because it is not expected to change.

Public Use Management Plan Regulations

In the last update the draft alternatives we presented included proposed refuge regulations--seasonal closure of four high bear use sites, day use restrictions in an additional five areas, and several other public use restrictions. These closures applied to all alternatives because we believed the regulations setting the closures in place would be finalized by now. These regulations would have implemented portions of the Kodiak Refuge Public Use Management Plan, completed in 1994. Last August we made the decision to re-evaluate the need for these regulations as part of the CCP revision and look at alternatives for managing these areas proposed in the bear conservation and management plan.



Dave Menke/USFWS

Category	Alternative A (Current Management)	Alternative B
Wilderness	No designated wilderness; recommend approximately 1.1 million acres for designation	Recommend none of the Refuge for designation as wilderness.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	No rivers designated or recommended for designation.	No rivers recommended for designation
Genetic Integrity of Wild Fish Stocks in the "Refugium" * Drainages	Existing policy discourages, but does not prohibit, enhancement projects that could affect the genetic integrity of wild fish stocks	Existing policy discourages, but does not prohibit, enhancement projects that could affect the genetic integrity of wild fish stocks
Public Use Cabin Program	Maintain nine public use cabins (seven exist now; could construct up to two more); in addition, abandoned cabins or cabins on newly acquired lands could be converted to public use cabins	Allow more than nine public use cabins as needed to meet demand (more than two new cabins could be constructed)
Campsite Management for Unguided Use	Limit development and management of campsites	Expand development and management of campsites as needed (such as hardening sites or providing food cache facilities) for visitor safety and resource protection
Protection of Bear Use Areas	Enact regulations to seasonally restrict all public access at nine key bear use areas; continue restrictions on commercial operators until regulations are in place	Re-evaluate key bear use areas and allow compatible public access equitably distributed between guided and non-guided users manner
O'Malley Bear Viewing	Maintain seasonal closure of former bear viewing site at O'Malley Creek	Reopen O'Malley site to bear viewing for guided day use only

*The Kodiak Refugium is an area of distinctive flora and rolling landscapes located in the southwestern portion of the refuge including parts of the Karluk, Ayakulik, Sturgeon, and Frazer drainages. It was unglaciated during the last glacial advance about 20,000 years ago.

Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E
Recommend the area known as the "Refugium" * for designation as wilderness.	Recommend approximately 1.1 million acres (current) plus suitable acquired lands for designation as Wilderness	Recommend all suitable acreage for designation as wilderness.
Recommend the Ayakulik River for designation	Recommend the Uganik and Ayakulik rivers for designation	Recommend the Uganik, Ayakulik and Spiridon rivers, and Humpy Creek for designation
Existing policy discourages, but does not prohibit, enhancement projects that could affect the genetic integrity of wild fish stocks	Prohibit activities that would affect genetic integrity of stocks in the Ayakulik River drainage, in a manner consistent with ADF & G's Finfish Genetics Policy	Prohibit activities that would affect genetic integrity of stocks in the Ayakulik, Karluk, and Sturgeon river drainages, in a manner consistent with ADF & G's Finfish Genetics Policy
Allow more than nine public use cabins as needed to meet demand (more than two new cabins could be constructed)	Maintain nine public use cabins (could construct up to two more); in addition, abandoned cabins or cabins on newly acquired lands could be converted to public use cabins	Allow natural attrition of public use cabins
Expand development and management of campsites as needed (such as hardening sites or providing food cache facilities) for visitor safety and resource protection	Limit development and management of campsites	Limit development and management of campsites
Re-evaluate key bear use areas and allow compatible public access equitably distributed between guided and non-guided users manner	Re-evaluate key bear use areas and allow compatible public access equitably distributed between guided and non-guided users manner	Enact regulations to seasonally restrict all public access at nine key bear use areas; continue restrictions on commercial operators until regulations are in place
Conduct needs assessment before deciding whether to reopen O'Malley (and/or open other sites) to bear viewing for guided day use	Conduct needs assessment before deciding whether to reopen O'Malley (and/or open other sites) to bear viewing for guided day use	Maintain seasonal closure of former bear viewing site at O'Malley Creek

Refuge Goals

The first planning update for the Kodiak CCP revision, published in May of 1999, included interim goals for management of the Refuge. Since then the planning team has reviewed the goals and made some modifications. The revised goals for Kodiak Refuge are:

- Conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including, but not limited to, populations and habitats of the Kodiak brown bear, native salmonids, migratory birds and sea otters, in a refuge environment where populations can thrive.
- Increase our knowledge of fish, wildlife and plant populations, habitats and their interrelationships.
- Conserve the abundance of natural salmonid populations for continued human and wildlife use, and to ensure the diversity of species as indicators of the health of the refuge's ecosystem.
- Provide the opportunity for local residents to continue their subsistence uses on the refuge consistent with the subsistence priority and with other refuge purposes.
- Improve our understanding of all water resources on the refuge to determine baseline conditions in order to acquire and maintain the water quality and quantity necessary to meet refuge purposes.
- Provide high quality opportunities for the public to use and enjoy refuge resources through compatible fish and wildlife dependent recreational and commercial activities including hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography.
- Provide outreach, interpretive, and environmental education programs that increase a sense of stewardship for wildlife, cultural resources, and the environment, and enhance visitor experiences on the refuge.
- Continue to allow compatible uses of the refuge which support commercial fisheries and other commercial activities occurring off-refuge.
- Conserve the cultural and archaeological resources on the refuge.
- Conserve special and unique features of the Kodiak Archipelago ecosystem within the refuge.
- Promote close working relationships with the State of Alaska, local communities and other public and private partners.

Habitat Protection Agreement for the Karluk & Sturgeon Rivers

A proposed habitat protection agreement between Koniag, Inc. and the **Exxon Valdez** Oil Spill Trustee Council for the Karluk and Sturgeon river drainages will govern the use of lands owned by Koniag, Inc. within the Kodiak Refuge. The agreement involves nearly 58,000 acres of important habitat for a variety of EVOS injured fish, wildlife, and services plus other nationally significant resources. This is a unique agreement that, when signed, will provide for ten-year easements on the lands with an option to extend the easements and an option for a future sale.

Among the documents to be approved are: an extension of the current non-development easement until October 14, 2002; a conservation easement, effective October 15, 2002, which provides direction on use and management of these lands by Koniag, the U.S., and the State of Alaska; and a limited development easement which defines and limits Koniag's rights to develop its lands on Camp Island.

The agreement will, among other items: limit development on these lands to five public use cabins along the Karluk River and a lodge and associated facilities on Camp Island; allow public use of these lands with limits and restrictions (including use of a permit system to limit the level and location of public uses other than subsistence); require the refuge to initiate a study to determine acceptable levels of public use and qualifications and operating standards for the permit system by January 1, 2002; and require the refuge to manage these lands

in a manner that is compatible with refuge purposes.

For additional information, including the full text of the proposed agreement, contact the Kodiak Refuge (see back page) or visit the Service's website at: <http://www.r7.fws.gov/compatibility/intheworks/kodiak>.

New Manager Named

Leslie Kerr, manager of Selawik Refuge since 1995, has been selected by the Service as the new manager for Kodiak Refuge. She replaces former manager Jay Bellinger who retired in January. Leslie brings 20 years of Alaska experience to her new position. As a planning team leader in the 1980s, she worked on the comprehensive plans for Tetlin, Kanuti, Nowitna, and Alaska Maritime refuges. From 1990 to 1995 she served as the Chief of Planning for Alaska's 16 refuges.

Leslie holds a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from the University of Minnesota and did graduate work at Harvard University in Advanced Environmental Studies. Looking forward to her new job, Leslie said "It's a tremendous honor to serve as project leader for Kodiak Refuge, one of the crown jewels of the National Wildlife Refuge System." Her experience with comprehensive planning for Alaska refuges will be a great asset as we complete the revision of the Kodiak Refuge CCP.

How Can You Help?

We would like to get your suggestions on the approaches that we describe in the preliminary alternatives. Do they reflect an adequate range of management options? Do the combinations of actions in each alternative make sense, or do we need to arrange the actions differently? Have we identified all the potential ways of resolving a given issue? The enclosed work sheet can help you focus your responses, but you can respond any way you choose. To be most helpful to us we would like to receive your comments by **October 31, 2001**. If you miss that date, please respond anyway as we want to hear from you. Your comments will be considered whenever they arrive.

What Is Next?

Over the next few months we will be analyzing these preliminary alternatives and developing a draft CCP and environmental impact statement. We will not be able to finalize that process until after the Kodiak Archipelago Bear Conservation and Management Plan is completed and we are able to incorporate final recommendations into the alternatives. Changes in the recommendations relating to managing the Kodiak refuge may result in changes to these preliminary alternatives.

Public meetings to discuss both the bear management plan and the preliminary alternatives for management of the Refuge are tentatively planned for October.

The bear management plan will be completed in December 2001. We hope to have a public review draft comprehensive conservation plan and environmental impact statement available to the public in February 2002. A 90 to 120 day comment period on the draft CCP will follow. Public meetings will be held in local communities during this period. The final plan should be completed in late 2002.



North Frazer Public Use Cabin, Kodiak NWR.

Karen A. Murphy/USFWS



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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How to contact us:

You can contact the planning team leader or the refuge manager with comments or questions. You can reach us by email at:

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or through our website at:

<http://www.r7.fws.gov/planning/plan.html>

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National Wildlife Refuge System Mission Statement

To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats of the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

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**Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
Plan Revision Response Sheet, Summer 2001**

The Summer 2001 newsletter asks for your comments on a number of issues facing the refuge. You may use this response sheet to comment if you choose. To be most useful to us, please respond by October 31. Thanks for your help!

1. The newsletter describes five preliminary alternatives--different approaches we could take to managing the refuge over the next 10-15 years (one of the five is the existing management direction). Do you have any suggestions for changes to any of the alternatives and how they address issues facing the refuge?

2. The newsletter describes five possible recommendations regarding additional wilderness and three possible recommendations for designating Wild and Scenic Rivers on the refuge. Do you have ideas or preferences about the wilderness or Wild and Scenic River recommendations, or how they should be incorporated into the management alternatives?

3. The alternatives contain actions designed to protect key bear concentration areas while still providing people with opportunities to view bears. This summer and fall, we will be studying this issue in more detail. What types of bear viewing opportunities do you feel are appropriate or desirable on the Refuge?

4. Do you have any other comments on the information contained in the newsletter?

Thanks for your help!

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